

TOWARDS A MIDDLE-INCOME BANGLADESH

Rise of entrepreneurs raises hope

Experts tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The rise of domestic entrepreneurs, supported by cheap and young labour force, has raised hope for Bangladesh to become a middle-income country by the next decade, said the experts at a roundtable yesterday.

The roundtable titled 'Towards a Middle-Income Bangladesh' was organised by The Daily Star, a member of Asia News Network (ANN), to mark the board meeting of ANN in Dhaka.

Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam, who is also the chairman of ANN, moderated the discussion.

"Bangladesh has become a proven source through RMG. Availability of labour supported by demographic profile has created opportunities for this country.

Entrepreneurs here are also becoming self sufficient," said Syed Nasim Manzur, managing director of Apex Adelchi Footwear Ltd, while taking part in the discussion.

He also pointed to growing domestic and regional markets and stressed the need for forging alliances with global players to complement the competitive advantages.

"We have to change the brand name of Bangladesh. It's a country of opportunity. We have achieved an export earning of \$10 billion even fighting against various negative factors such as hartals," said Annisul Huq, newly-elected president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FCCI).

Stressing the need for improving intra-regional trade to diversify

the export base, Citibank NA Managing Director Mamun Rashid said BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) countries are still untapped markets for Bangladesh to improve its export base.

He recommended for putting highest priority to build up a large skilled workforce to match the growth and structural transformation of the economy and expand the demand for migrant workers within the global economy.

Mamun said the biggest challenge for the economy is to develop infrastructure such as power, ports and telecommunications.

"We also need to make sure that our agriculture sector continues to improve its performance," he added.

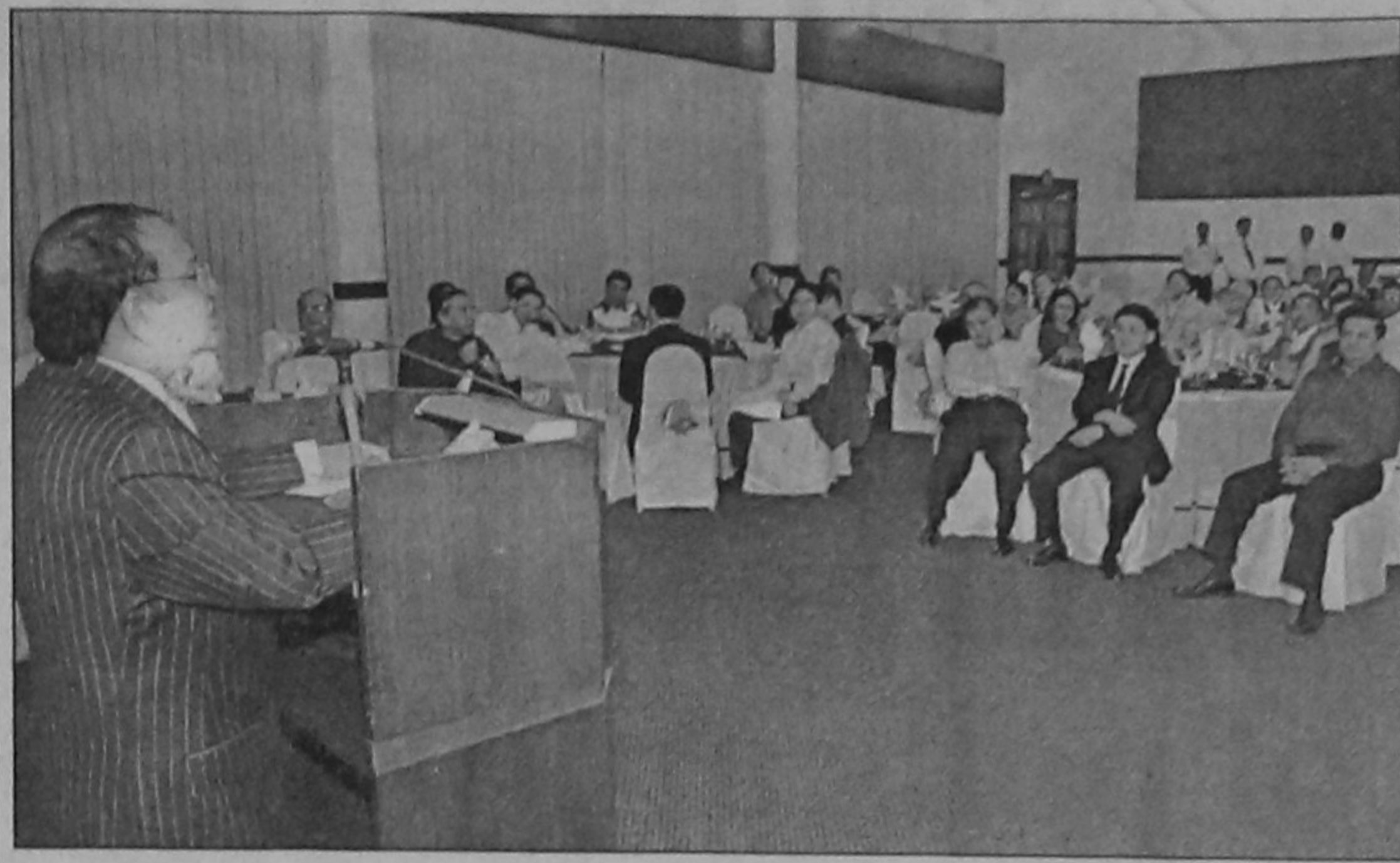
Saiful Islam, chairman of Western Marine Ship Yard Ltd, said the country has a promising future

in spite of natural and man-made calamities.

He said Bangladesh is emerging as shipbuilding nation as some shipbuilders have started building vessels for export, mostly for European clients.

"Shipbuilding has always been considered a spring board for modern-day development and so be it for Bangladesh to emerge as the leading middle-income country in near future," he added.

The discussants also underscored the need for redefining the brand image of Bangladesh, and forging alliance with global players to complement competitive advantages not only to catch up the global and regional markets but also to make a strong hold on the domestic market having about 140 million population.



Foreign Adviser Iftakhar Ahmed Chowdhury speaks at a dinner hosted by The Daily Star in honour of the visiting members of the Asia News Network (ANN) at Spectra Convention Centre in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

'Meeting basic needs, life of dignity must be ensured'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Meeting the basic needs of the people and a life of dignity must be ensured before Bangladesh can be called a 'truly' middle-income country, development practitioners said at a roundtable yesterday.

"Bangladesh may become a middle-income country, but will it be more humane -- with equitable income and no gender disparity -- and protect the country's religious and ethnic minorities: that is the question," said Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation Shaheen Anam.

The Daily Star organised the roundtable on 'Advancement in social sectors' in the city for the visiting editors of the Asian News Network (ANN), a network of

national daily newspapers published in Asian cities.

The fulfilment of basic needs and dignified life are necessary to recognise Bangladesh as a middle-income country, said Shaheen Anam.

She said the NGOs act as watchdogs for an array of government sectors and also work to complement government programmes in sectors such as health, education, micro-credit, water and sanitation, agriculture, environment and pro-poor advocacy.

As the country moves forward, it has to assist the people who have been socially excluded, she said, adding that the NGOs have made significant strides in a number of sectors.

Salehuddin Ahmed, pro-vice chancellor of Brac University, said

Bangladesh's NGOs have learned from the poor, while 'the problem' resides with the elite, rather than the poor -- the majority of the population.

He said the success of social entrepreneurs have been based on their innovation to mobilise their own resources to learn and adapt to changing social and economic circumstances.

But, he said, the challenges for the country and the NGOs are to improve the quality of education and lower the rate of infant and maternal mortality.

Iftakharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, spoke of his organisation's achievement in fighting corruption and successfully campaigning to bring about institutional reforms.

Dhaka condemns web posting of Dutch film on Quran

BSS, Dhaka

A spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday condemned in the strongest terms the website posting of a film by a Dutch right-wing politician critical of the holy Quran.

"This unwarranted and mindless action can have grave consequences, because it will offend millions of Muslims around the world," the spokesman added.

No right thinking person can endorse this, the spokesman further stated, also noting that the Dutch government has distanced itself from this aberrant act.

"Islam is a faith of peace which preaches patience and understanding, and the message of the holy Quran has been the source of hope and inspiration for humanity through centuries. The posting of this film on website does not alter that abiding truth in any way", the spokesman observed.

The film by Dutch lawmaker Geert Wilders was posted on Thursday on his Freedom Party's website, which crashed soon afterwards. But it could still be viewed on a file-sharing website in English and Dutch, according to Reuters.

The film had been broadcast on the internet with the aid of a Britain-based organisation.

In a bid to defuse Muslim anger, Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende said he rejected Wilders' views.

Dutch broadcasters had refused to show the film and a US-based web service, which Wilders had planned to use, deactivated the site at the weekend after receiving complaints.

Scouts workshop on strategic planning held

A national workshop on strategic planning of Bangladesh Scouts was held yesterday at its headquarters at Kakral in the city, says a press release.

The strategic plan for 2006-13 was discussed in the workshop.

Chief National Commissioner of Bangladesh Scouts M Fazlur Rahman inaugurated the workshop.

National commissioner, deputy national commissioners, regional scouters, headquarters officials participated in the workshop.



Iftakhar Husain full-fledged PIO

Iftakhar Husain has been promoted to full-fledged Principal Information Officer (PIO) of the Press Information Department (PID), says a PID handout.

He was serving as acting PIO for the last one and a half year.

In his career Husain held a number of important positions in various capacities including director general of the Bangladesh Films Archive, director general of the Department of Mass Communication and director general of the Department of Films and Publications.

He also worked as vice chairman of the Bangladesh Film Censor Board and first secretary (press) at Embassy of Bangladesh to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

FFs faught valiantly

FROM PAGE 1

Now leading an 11-member delegation of Indian war veterans on a visit to Bangladesh at the invitation of Chief of Army Staff Gen Moeen U Ahmed, he was talking to newsmen at the Indian high commission in Dhaka. He expressed gratitude for inviting them to join the Independence Day celebrations.

Looking back to the days in the lead-up to December 16, 1971, he spoke about his negotiations with Niazi on the instrument of surrender and the Pakistani general's threat of revenge and submitting another person's revolver as his own.

He also related how his country became involved in Bangladesh's war of independence unofficially in early April, 1971.

Jack Jacob, who drafted the historic "instrument of surrender", enlisted in the Indian army in 1941 when it was under British command, and retired in 1978.

Recounting how Niazi insisted on holding the surrender ceremony in his office, he said: "This man really behaved badly with the people of Bangladesh. What their army did, you know it all... I don't want to repeat."

He continued: "I wanted him to surrender in front of the people of Dhaka. He said, 'I won't surrender, I'd surrender in Dhaka office.' I said, 'No, you would surrender in the Racecourse Maidan [now Suhrawardy Udyan] in front of the people of Dhaka.' It's the only public surrender in history."

On views that it was risky to arrange the surrender ceremony in public with not much troops mobilised yet, he said, "I knew we had hardly any troops outside Dhaka and it was problematic for public surrender. But had it been better to be in safety and make him surrender in his office? No, I wanted him to face the people."

Recollecting those historic moments, the architect of surrender ceremony said, "Niazi retorted, 'Dhaka would fall over my dead body.' But I did it the way I thought it should be. I didn't have any directives or instructions for it. Was it wrong, task you?"

In the morning of December 16, Jacob was asked to "go and get the surrender."

"What happened on December 13... there was an American resolution vetoed by the Soviet Union. The Russians said, 'You better hurry up, we can't be going.' Then on 14th December, we intercepted a message that there was a meeting in the government's house. With the governor and Niazi at the meeting, we arranged to have an air strike on the house. And after that the governor resigned."

"General Niazi, Farman Ali went to see the American Consul-General Spivack (Herbert Spivack) on the 14th (December 14) afternoon with the proposals for ceasefire under UN, withdrawal under UN, hand-over of government to UN, withdrawal of anybody including ethnic minorities under UN and no war crimes, and there were some other

clauses." But Bhutto, who was then at the UN office in New York, refused to accept the ceasefire, Jacob said, adding, "So, on the 15th (of December), the Americans gave it to us in Delhi and we accepted the ceasefire. On the 16th morning, I was told to go and get the surrender."

About Niazi's reaction to the proposal for surrender, he recalled: "He [Niazi] said, 'Who said I would surrender? You have come here only to [discuss] a ceasefire.' So, this argument went on."

The documents he gave to them for surrender said Pakistan forces would surrender to joint Indo-Bangladesh command. But Major Gen (ret'd) Rao Farman Ali, then an adviser to the governor of East Pakistan, said, "There is no question of anything with Bangladesh army." They insisted it would have to be the Indians only.

"I'm not going to go through all those details; this was a very difficult negotiation," Jacob said.

Later, Niazi told the Pakistan's enquiry commission headed by Justice Hamudur Rahman that he [Jacob] had blackmailed him into surrender. "He said, 'I was forced to surrender because General Jacob blackmailed me.' I never blackmailed him."

Giving Niazi 30 minutes to make up his mind, Jacob walked out. "Going back, I put the paper on his table and asked him, 'Do you accept this document?' For three times he didn't answer and I picked it up and said [it's] taken as accepted," he went on.

During the negotiations, he also asked the Pakistani general to surrender his revolver. "He put a dirty little revolver. The lanyard was dirty and frayed in parts."

In his book "Surrender at Dacca: Birth of a Nation", Jacob said he realised only later that the pistol was not Niazi's. It was a normal army issue .38 revolver.

"The barrel was choked with muck and apparently had not been cleaned for some considerable time... More likely, Niazi had taken it from one of his military policemen and surrendered it as his personal weapon. I could not help feeling that in his own way, Niazi had got a little of his own back," he wrote.

On the absence of General MAG Osmani, then the commander in chief of the Bangladesh armed forces, in the surrender ceremony at Racecourse Maidan, Jacob said, "He was in Sylhet. He had a helicopter but he couldn't make it. It's not our fault. We wanted him there."

Quenied exactly when India had engaged in the war, he chuckled and asked back, "Officially or unofficially?"

Going into details, he said India was monitoring the situation since the launch of Operation Searchlight, the crackdown on the civilians, on March 26 and was shocked at the events that unfolded across the border.

"We had Mujib's declaration... Zia's declaration on inde-

pendence. When the refugees started coming in, I was standing on the border... they were in a very shocking state. Soon we started getting more and more refugees and the government of India decided that we should help the Mukti Bahini, the freedom fighters."

The official orders certainly came later, he added. "The help was extended, and more and more involvement took place. For instance, Tajuddin, Nazrul Islam, Osmani, and Khandker... they all came to the Theatre Road, and the Muktis were organised."

"The time... it was in April unofficially." Officially, India's involvement in the war began on December 3.

In conversation with New York Times reporter Sydney Schanberg that day, Jacob said the eastern army was confident of liberating Bangladesh in a short time.

Asked yesterday what made him that confident, he said, "We were prepared for this. Anyone knew we were going to liberate Bangladesh. The Mukti Bahini were trained, equipped, the East Bengal Regiment was there, and the Indian army was waiting to go."

On December 3 evening, Pakistan bombed Indian airfields in the west, therefore it was taken as a war. "So, we moved in."

Asked about his interrogation of Niazi and some of the other generals after the surrender, Jacob said, "They denied the atrocities, they denied everything... and said they would never forget the humiliation and would take 'badla' (revenge) for it."

Reminiscing his days with Bangladeshi politicians, Jacob described former prime minister Tajuddin Ahmad, who was instrumental in forming the first government of Bangladesh, as "one of the finest people I've ever met."

"I had great privilege of working with him. Nazrul Islam, Osmani... we worked together. I found them dedicated nationalists, great people."

Asked why India and Bangladesh failed to try the Pakistani prisoners of war, he said: "As far as I recollect, political agreement was that Pakistan government would try them when they would go back."

Talking on Bangladesh-India relations, Jacob said the ties have been "very good from the beginning and are getting stronger and stronger."

However, there should be much more interaction between the two countries in commerce, trade, investment and other areas of economy. They share common interests, border, and have Bangla-speaking people, he said.

"On the whole it is very, very good. We have common interest and we have to work together. We're both powers in the region; Bangladesh is a very powerful country."

Jacob said 1,400 Indian troops were killed and 4,000 wounded during the Liberation War.

Five bombs seized in Chittagong

CU CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered five homemade bombs in an abandoned condition from Chan Mian Munsil Lane under Bakalia Police Station in Chittagong yesterday.

Sources said a local person saw the bombs packed in a black plastic bag on a farmland near Laboratory School at around 9.30am.

He informed the matter to police. Police called their bomb disposal unit, which later deactivated the bombs.

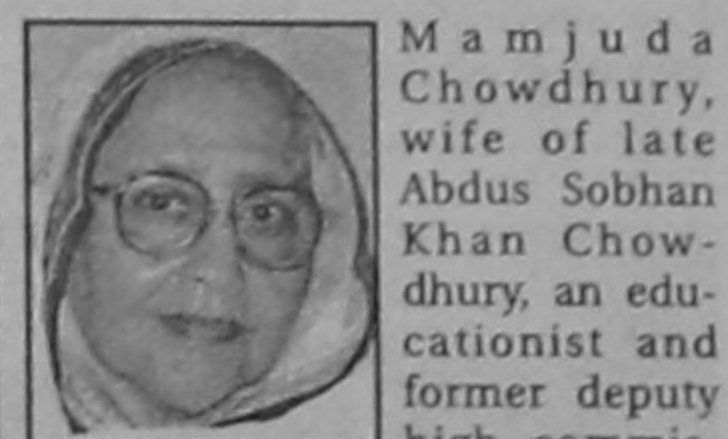
Obituary

Alhaj AKM Mogbulur Rahman, former deputy general manager of Bangladesh Bank, passed away at Apollo Hospitals in the city yesterday at the age of 75, says a press release.

He left behind one daughter, four sons, grandsons and granddaughters to mourn his death.

He will be buried at his village home in Chandpur after return of his third son Wing Commander Abu Sayem Mahmud Saif of the Bangladesh Air Force, now on deputation as deputy leader of the Bangladesh contingent of the UNPKF in Congo, on Monday.

Mamjuda Chowdhury



Mamjuda Chowdhury, wife of late Abdus Sobhan Khan Chowdhury, an educationist and former deputy high commiss-

ioner of Bangladesh to India, passed away due to old age complications at LabAid Cardiac Centre in the city yesterday at the age of 84, says a press release.

She left behind three daughters, relatives and a host of admirers to mourn her death.

She is the mother-in-law of Dr Iqbal Mahmud, former vice-chancellor of BUET and Iqbal Hasan Mahmud, former state minister.

She was buried at the Azampur graveyard beside his husband's grave yesterday.

Her quikhani will be held at her Lalmita residence (6/1, Block-C) after Asr prayers on Monday.

Zaheda Khanom



Zaheda Khanom, wife of Engr Rafiqul Haque and one of the pioneers of women rights movement, passed away at Gonoshasthaya

Nagor Hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 85, says a press release.

She left behind a daughter, a son, grandchildren and a host of relatives to mourn her death.

She will be buried at her family graveyard in Gazipur after namaz-e-janaza at Dhanmondi Eidgah Maidan tomorrow.

Her quikhani will be held after Maghrib prayers on Monday.

Principal Ibrahim's death anniversary today

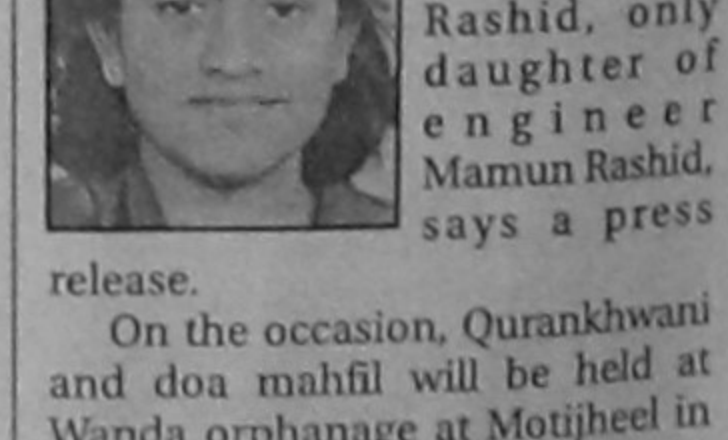
The 30th death anniversary of Principal Ibrahim Khan, educationalist and social reformist, will be held in the city and Tangail today, says a press release.

On the occasion, Quirankhwani, milad mahfils and drawing competition for children will be held in Tangail.

Scholarships distribution among the poor and meritorious students will also be held.

A discussion will be held at Public Library seminar room in the city at 4:00pm.

Syed Ahmed



Today is the fourth death anniversary of Syed Ahmed, former cabinet secretary and former director of World Bank, says a press release.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Farah Amena Rashid



Today is the eighth death anniversary of Farah Amena Rashid, only daughter of engineer Mamun Rashid, says a press release.

On the occasion, Quirankhwani and doa mahfil will be held at Wapda orphanage at Motijheel in the city. Food will also be distributed among the destitute.

ALRD lauds CA's speech on CHT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) greeted the speech of the chief adviser about Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and said the upcoming initiatives of the government will bring the CHT people in the main stream of the development.

In a statement ALRD said mobile phone network coverage in the CHT region and increasing the salary and remuneration of 'headman' and 'karbari' are important initiatives.

The statement also thanked the initiative to solve the land disputes by appointing a chairman to the Land Commission to make it active.

These steps of the government will connect the hill people with the majority of the population and solve many existing problems.



Veteran journalist ABM Musa speaks at the biennial general meeting of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) as the chief guest at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right is BFUJ President Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul and on his left are DUJ President Altaf Mahmud and General Secretary Omar Faruque.

Workers urged not to go to Kurdistan illegally

UNB, Dhaka

A spokesman for the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment yesterday made a strong appeal to Bangladeshi workers not to go to Kurdistan illegally.

The spokesman referred to some recent media reports that 1500 Bangladeshis are in dire

straits having travelled without documents to Kurdistan.

"There are many better opportunities now for legal employment, and so this is absolutely unnecessary," the spokesman added.

He said the government will take action against the recruiting agents who will be involved in sending people without valid travel documents.

WEATHER TODAY

Rise in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore, Kushtia and Comilla in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country. Day temperature may rise slightly over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 37.2 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 18.4 degrees Celsius at Tangail.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:14pm today and rises at 5:53am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	35.2	22.8	79	46
Chittagong	30.3	25.0	77	77
Rajshahi	37.2	22.6	61	28
Khulna	35.2	22.5	81	54
Barisal	34.5	24.0	85	73
Sylhet	29.7	19.0	88	73
Cox's Bazar	32.6	24.7	69	76

DHAKA TODAY

**Seminar**  
Centre for Advanced Research in Humanities of Dhaka University organises a seminar on poet Shamsur Rahman's philosophy of life. Venue: Centre for Advanced Research in Humanities. Time: 4:00pm.

**Conference**  
Bangladesh Science Writers and Journalists Forum organises the second national conference of science writers and journalists. Venue: BCSIR auditorium. Time: 9:00am.

**Rotary Dhaka Central**  
The regular meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 1:30pm.

**Publication ceremony**  
The publication ceremony of a memorial book on Bangla language titled 'Mahan Ekushey Subamajoyanti Grantha' will be held. Adorn publications will publish the book. Venue: Cirdap Auditorium. Time: 10:30am.

**Discussion**  
Principal Ibrahim Khan Foundation organises a discussion to mark the 30th death anniversary of Principal Ibrahim Khan. Venue: Public Library seminar room. Time: 4:30pm.

**Science fair**  
The inaugural session of a science fair will be held. Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) organises the fair. Venue: BCSIR meeting room. Time: 11:00am.

**Roundtable**  
Bangladesh Institute of Leadership and Security Studies organises a roundtable on 'National security council'. Venue: Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. Time: 10:30am.



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He also worked as vice chairman of the Bangladesh Film Censor Board and first secretary (press) at Embassy of Bangladesh to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



Aranyak, a theatre group, stages a drama titled 'Khekshial' at Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday. The drama was staged on the occasion of the 12th founding anniversary of the museum.